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Home

Louis Legrand Noble

MR. NOBLE'S POEM

BEFORE

THE HOUSE OF CONVOCATION

OF

Trinity College,

1857.

3.

Home.

A P O E M,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE HOUSE OF CONVOCATION

OF

Trinity College,

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 1857.

BY THE REV. LOUIS L. NOBLE, M. A.,

RECTOR OF TRINITY CHURCH, FREDONIA, N. Y.

HARTFORD:
PRESS OF CASE, LOCKWOOD AND COMPANY.
1857.

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~~English~~

23723 Woods

Dedication.

To

The Rev. A. F. OLMSTED,

Of Society Hill, S. C.

L. L. N.

~~Engl.~~ no. 5F18 Cadmus 100

p 41561

P O E M .

I.

Far away in fair New England, on the gentle sloping hills,
Lived Colonus in the dwelling deep embow'd in maple
shades.

Round it lay the grounds paternal, liliated ponds, and pebbly
rills :

Pines, and drooping elms, and orchards, folded in the
grassy glades.

Early was he wedded to the fairest of New England's
maids :

Love and holiness of heart she brought him on the marriage
day :

Gentleness of spirit was the jewel in her glossy braids :
Rosy faces, silvery voices, round the table, out at play,
Made the year melodeous, blooming, made the months the
month of May.

II.

When the snow-drifts from the pastures melted in the April
rain,

In their whiteness lay the fleecy flocks upon the flowery
green ;

July heard the mowers in the meadows, saw the yellow
grain ;

August prop'd the boughs ; September shook them of their
crimson sheen ;

At the fireside, in the garner, winter sang the golden
 mean ;
 Quiet Sundays listen'd to the honey'd hive, and cooing dove,
 To the sounding steeple, lofty poplars peeping out between,
 Calling households up to worship, and the saving word of
 love,
 And the poor and weary to the hearing of the home above.

III.

On the mountains, near the azure, airy lines of beauty lay ;
 Down upon the ancient forests cliffs of hoary granite
 frown'd ;
 O'er their shaggy bosoms wander calm and tempest night
 and day ;
 In their ragged chasms torrents white and angry whirl
 and bound ;
 Through a rocky gorge, terrific, rough, a stately river
 wound,
 Glassing in its lucid blackness scowling crag and evergreen ;
 Moving with majestic stillness through the solitude
 profound ;
 Sweeping through the fields in graceful windings,—the
 broader scene,
 Endless brightness,—soothing, endless music to the day
 serene.

IV.

Blowing from the blue Atlantic, breezes fann'd the balmy
 morn ;
 Scatter'd bloom and pollen ; sprinkled moisture on the
 grass and flowers ;
 Breath'd refreshing round the reapers ; cool'd the workers in
 the corn :
 Lights and shadows play'd upon the clover in the leafy
 bowers,

Deftly weaving there their dapple carpet through the
 sunny hours :
 Softly silken mists, the mountain's shining flocks, went up
 on high ;
 Creeping round the waterfalls and ledges, where the
 hemlock towers ;
 Leaving snowy locks upon the pointed spruces,—passing by
 Pinnacle and peak to pasture on the sunshine in the sky.

V.

Blowing from the blue Atlantic, bringing murmurs, spreading
 motion,
 Breezes roll'd the billows from the far horizon to the shore :
 Rocky headlands met them, beat them, boldly beat them back
 to ocean ;
 Field and woodland feel the angry conflict, vales resound
 the roar :
 When the green battalions charged the precipices steep
 and hoar,
 Rushing on their solid bucklers, worn from many an ancient
 year,
 Smiting hard their rugged helmets, moveless, firm
 forevermore,
 Bravely crag and cliff received them, each upon his granite
 spear ;
 Pierc'd them, toss'd them into brightness, plung'd them into
 blackness drear.

VI.

Where the castled gates were tumbled in the tide, a shatter'd
 heap,
 Bursting on the hollow gloom and terror of the hidden
 night,
 Far into the horrid caverns rush'd the lions of the deep,
 Flashing with phosphoric glory, shaggy, fleec'd with
 sparkling light :

Hark, redoubling thunders ! See the carnage of the billowy
 fight !
 See the light-wing'd surf upon the reef!—upon the shoals
 abreast the land !
 Tossing sheaves of briny splendour, twisting jewel'd wreaths
 of white,
 Swiftly wheel the crested squadrons green and lustrous to
 the strand :
 Lo, they perish ! in their glory perish, on the trembling sand !

VII.

Thus in view of mountain sunsets, and the booming breakers'
 foam,
 Lapp'd in strong and beauteous nature, bosom'd in the
 bounteous year,
 Lay that old New England Homestead, stood the brown
 paternal home,
 Ever to his fathers precious, ever to Colonus dear.
 From a restless spirit, or ambition, what has he to fear ?
 Generations labour'd on those pleasant acres ; would not
 he ?
 Cheerful, happy in the present, hopeful of the future,
 here,
 Marks of noble patience left they, from the mountains to
 the sea :
 Would not he, or they, work on content, brave-hearted,
 fearless, free ?

VIII.

“ Would or would not,” was no question with Colonus.
 Home, with him,
 Was no mere convenience, soulless, hollow shell to turn
 the shower ;
 Wood and stone to ward the wind and sunshine, warm a
 chilly limb ;
 Transient pleasure's cold pavilion, passion's perishable
 bower ;

No mere hostelry to feed and sleep in, for an idle hour ;
Place of sale and barter, lightly to be bought itself, and
sold ;
Not a castle whence to sally, in the war for place and
power ;
In the graceless contest with the hard and heartless world for
gold ;
Where to doze in luxury, in poverty to sour or mould.

IX.

“Would, or would not,” was no question with Colonus.
Home, with him,
Was, in sooth, no mere convenience, Shell or Shield from
heat or shower ;
But the ordinance of Mercy, when were placed the Cherubim
At the gates of Eden, and our parents, in that mournful
hour,
Enter’d first the waste of thorns, first knew the smiling
skies to lower :
Holy ground, where Jacob slumber’d ; saw the Angels go
and come :
Tent or dwelling near the tabernacle of Jehovah’s power,
Where we make, and worship daily, with our children, as we
roam,
Winding through this wilderness, slowly traveling to the
promis’d home :

X.

Sacred fold, where youth, protected from the lion, wolf and
leopard,
Meekly trusting, loving, fearing the paternal will and
power,
Hears the call, and learns to follow lovingly the heavenly
Shepherd :
Dear tradition, of the olden speaking every vocal bower ;

Love and tenderness departed looking every tearful flower :
 Palm and fountain in the desert, whence the heated sands we
 roam ;

Whither for refreshing weary we return : God's blessed
 dower :

Pledge and token of the peerless, priceless heritage to come :
 Omen of enduring substance ; symbol of eternal home.

XI.

Lightly o'er Colonus rolled the quiet waves of ripening
 years,

Tinging hue and lustre in the ruddy cheek and raven
 hair :

Still he sees the mountain sunset, still the sounding ocean
 hears,

Musing in the tender twilight under antique maples
 there.

Of the changes and the chances of the world he had his
 share :

Children, come from God, to God returning early, left their
 traces

Round the bosom's living fountains ; footprints of their
 beauty rare

On the stainless lilies ; sweet memorials of their cherub faces
 Where the loveliness of sunlight and of moonlight soft
 embraces,

XII.

In the smiling pinks and pansies, in the lone complaining
 brooks,

In melodious warbling o'er their dreamless slumber in the
 grave,

The remembrance of their voices and their sinless lives and
 looks :

Children, not so favour'd haply, bidden to remain and
 brave

Trouble's dark and tangled woodlands, and temptation's
 perilous wave,
 Grew to comely sons and daughters, giving wondrous
 strength and grace—
 Giving to the household what paternal love from heaven
 would crave :
 Sinking by their lonely worship, meekly, in one warm
 embrace,
 Nature, neighbors, hearth and altar, home and God's still
 dwelling place.

XIII.

But whate'er of change and chances, rolling 'neath the feet
 of God,
 Further and yet further fell their billowy forces from the
 heart ;
 Sprinkling only harmless spray, where often waves had lash'd
 the sod ;
 Multiplying peace and pouring softer balm on every smart ;
 Giving life a mellower coloring, hues above the power of
 art ;
 Making home the dearer in its mosses, and its deepening
 brown ;
 Eloquently telling, what no common language can impart,
 How that home-life is the true life,—quiet seed-time of
 renown,
 With an earnest of the harvest, Hopes of an unfading crown :

XIV.

Telling that there is in listless leisure, hunting pleasure
 brief ;
 That there is in endless seeking, restless roving to be blest,
 Less of dignity and gladness, more of labour, care and
 grief,
 Than in common toil and suffering of the lowliest home
 possest :

Telling lofty truth, in nature, and the written word confest,
That if action makes love conquer, art succeed, ambition
climb,

There is sacred strength in stillness, and majestic might in
rest ;

That if motion hath its beauty, its necessity, and time,
There is grandeur in the tranquil ; in repose the true
sublime.

XV.

Hark, the gale upon the mighty deep dark rolling ! Through
the night,

Forward moves the storm, loud speaking, wing'd with
blackness, plumed with fire,

Madly walking the proud billows, stepping on their fury
white :

O'er the crisped edges, down the darkness of abysses dire.

Peril frantic flees, entangled in her terrible attire.

Lo, the morn, the rosy, breathless morn, is moving o'er the
deep !

Silence hears afar the still, small music of her holy lyre :

Art thou there, Almighty, that thy seas this glorious Sabbath
keep ?

How divine the stillness of the ocean ! How sublime the
sleep !

XVI.

Hark, the rash tornado in the temples of unchanging green !

Roaring, bow their leafy battlements, and bend the
rustling towers ;

Crash the countless arches, snap the column, massy pillars
lean ;

Through the mazy aisles, upon the smoke and thunder of
the showers,

Wild confusion, thousand-footed, follows ; shattering ruin
scours.

Lo, the calm ! along the firmament how beautiful her feet !

Passing beautiful upon the peaceful woods the shining
hours !

Waters in the still magnificence their solemn cymbals beat ;
Solitude and awful gloom their silent psalm of rest repeat.

XVII.

What in all this tumult is there, what in these terrific throes,
But the passion and the labour with the tranquil to be blest ?
Thus all deep-most voices ever sound the grandeur of repose,
And all mighty motions magnify the excellence of rest.

Sober wings, in silence folded, safety find in secret nest ;
Fast the plummy ostrich o'er the desert from the Arab speeds ;
Brilliant pinions on the breezes tempt the arrow to the
breast ;

Feeds the timid hare in covert, straying o'er the lea she
bleeds.

Of the saving health of stillness nature endless lecture
reads.—

XVIII.

Endless lecture, that the beauty of all being upon earth,—

That the rare perfection of all life and effort here below,
Flourish in the sacred calmness of some central heart and
hearth ;

In the sweet sereneness of the genial dwelling bud and
blow ;—

That all restlessness is but impatience perfect rest to
know ;—

That confusion fades in order as to water fades the foam ;—

That all discontent and longing, and all hasting to and fro,
All unsettling of old feelings, all farewells afar to roam,
Is but hot excitement in the hunt for some completer home.

XIX.

Look, New England, westward ! Lo, thy stalwart sons and
 rosy daughters
 Leave behind the Alleghanies,—far and forward speed
 amain,—
 Take the rivers, mighty rivers,—furrow fields of emerald
 waters,—
 Search the winding vallies,—wander over grassy slope and
 plain,—
 Pierce the forest,—wake the solitude, and break its gloomy
 reign,—
 Dot the verdant, changeless billows of the prairie, boundless,
 lone ;—
 Red Apaches, fleet Camanches, wheel upon their wild
 domain,
 Wheel, and flee before them,—still beyond await them waste
 unknown :
 Virgin empires, climates, all the vast, wide continent they
 own.

XX.

Tell me wherefore all this movement ? Why this eager,
 restless range ?
 Merely for the love of sowing, do they sow the fruitless field ?
 Merely, O romantic multitudes, the appetite for change ?
 Or by some mysterious impulse driven, by some curse
 defiled,
 Hating home and country, do they flee, like Judah's
 deathless child ?
 Tell me by what potent spirit prompted ? by what fire possest ?
 By what hope inspired, enkindled ? by what glittering
 prize beguil'd ?
 'Tis the sleepless passion for some lasting, some more perfect
 rest :
 Happier dwellings, some fair Paradise about the golden west.

XXI.

So serenely the pure home-life lived Colonus, till the thought
 Was no more a startling, but a welcome thought, that he
 was old.

Counted he his locks their whiteness from some coming
 glories caught,

As the mountains catch their paleness, and the clouds their
 early gold,

From the splendours which behind Atlantic waves their
 gates unfold :

From some fast approaching stillness came the calmness of his
 breast,—

Came the sweetness of all nature, that calm sweetness all
 untold,

In the breaking of the morning, in the twilight of the west,
 Showing to the soul and senses symptoms of immortal rest.

XXII.

So Colonus lived serenely, lived sublimely, till he felt

All the fullness of the blessing of that calm New England
 home ;—

Till he felt, that, if the Angels dwell among us, there they
 dwelt,

And come hither, bright and fragrant from God's presence
 there they come ;

Waiting in the stillness motionless, and in the silence dumb ;
 Shedding lustre in the wine cup, radiance on the nuptial
 guest ;

Sprinkling babes with soft effulgence, joyous youth with
 rosy bloom :

Touching with celestial brightness tenderly the mourners
 breast,

When they gently take the parting spirit to its peaceful rest.

So Colonus lived serenely, lived divinely, till he slept ;
Going out upon a tide of love into the awful night.
Stately men and graceful women o'er his placid features wept,
Joyful in the trust, that he with Christ was walking,
 clothed in white ;
Waiting with departed saints, and resting in eternal light.
In the ground they laid him, looking for that perfect life to
 come ;
Looking for that final coming, coming terrible and bright.
When the sleeping bodies of the faithful quit the tranquil
 tomb,
And undying rise with glory to one everlasting home.

Far away in fair New England, on the gently sloping hills,
Stands the dwelling of Colonus, deep embower'd in maple
shades ;
Overlooking lands ancestral, liliated ponds, and glittering rills ;
Pines, and arching elms and orchards, folding in the
fragrant glades.
Gather they from time to time, the fairest of New England
maids ;
Coming to the olden home, and keeping jocund holiday :
In their looks are health and pleasure, grace upon their
glossy braids :
Rosy faces, silvery voices, round the tables, out at play,
Make the time melodious, blooming, make the hours the
hours of May.

XXV.

Cherish, O New England, cherish ever these thy rural homes.
Garnished by their velvet meadows, by their broad embowering
trees :

Leave to those who love them, who revere and love, these
happy domes :

Let their childhood see the daisies ; smell the clover of the
leas ;

Look from out the mountain windows ; play along the
breaking seas ;

Feel the stillness of the Lords-Day ; blossoms pluck the
graves above ;

Twine their memories with the winding, willowy brooks,
the birds and bees :

Round the festive fire be Fancy, Mirth, Affection, interwove :
Leave, with home, the *love* of home and homestead : all is
less than love.

XXVI.

Cherish we the Christain home, the old New England home
forever !

Ever live its true idea ! On the heart its picture wear !

Perish all the precious grace and lovely fashion of it never !

O to joy and sorrow sacred, consecrate to love and prayer,

Lose we not the inspirations of its pure and peaceful air !

Nature's genial inspirations, nature in her breadth and bloom ;

But, with rein upon the spirit strong the restless world to
dare,

Faithful, fearless in the tempest, patient, hopeful in the gloom,
Look for fields and shades immortal, and the home beyond
the Tomb.

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